

## Through the Bible — Job 1-15 — 10/26/2022

### Who was Job?

- Read Job 1:1
- Do we know for sure that Job was a real man? Not really but it's assumed to be that way by the later writers of Scripture. (Ezekiel 14:14, James 5:11)
- His name seems to be related to the word אֵיבָהּ, which means enmity, or the verb אֵיבָהּ, which means to be hostile to, to treat as enemy.
- Unlike the other heroes in the Bible, Job is not identified as being Jewish. The problems of Job apply to all mankind, so he is a kind of "Everyman".
- He is described as blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil (Job 1:1)
- He is also quite wealthy. 7 sons, 3 daughters, 7000 sheep, 3000 camels
- Job 1:3 - the greatest of all the men of the east
- While you might think the Job is an old man, there are clues in the text (some of which we will see in a little bit) that he was actually somewhat young.

### When did Job live?

- In the Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Sotah, twelve different opinions are given:
  - From the time of Abraham all the way to the time of the return from the Babylonian captivity
- In Job 1:8, God says, "For there is no one like him on the earth"
- Some speculate that this refers to the period between the death of Joseph (1657 BCE), a man of outstanding faith, and the birth of Moses (1527 BCE), the next major character of outstanding faith.
- In that same section of the Jerusalem Talmud, Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah says that Moses wrote the book of Job, and gives some proof texts for that idea. We'll come back to that in a few minutes.

### Where is Utz?

- Place names are often connected to people. There are three people named Utz in Genesis:
  - Utz #1 (Genesis 11:23), the son of **Aram** and grandson of Shem
  - Utz #2 (Genesis 22:21), son of Nahor and nephew of Abraham, who lived in **Aram-naharaim** ("Aram between the two rivers," Mesopotamia, modern day Iraq/Syria)
  - Utz #3 (Genesis 36:28), a descendant of Seir. The people of Seir were defeated by Esau, who was the father of the Edomites. The land of Utz is also mentioned later in Jeremiah 25:20 and Lamentations 4:21, referring to the Edomites and their apparent assistance of Nebuchadnezzar in destroying and plundering Jerusalem.
- Anyway, given the timeline the most likely place, if any, for Utz to be is Aram, Mesopotamia, modern day Iraq.
- Unless it's a wordplay, which we'll talk about later....

## Satan

- Satan is not a name it is a function
- שָׂטָן = HaSatan = the prosecutor, the district attorney who is set up to accuse Job
- This name is only used in this form in the book of Job and in Zechariah 3:1–2
  - Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and HaSatan standing at his right to accuse him. 2 And the LORD said to HaSatan, “The LORD rebuke you, HaSatan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log snatched from the fire?”
- Both of these instances are contextually set in legal settings.
- In every other instance where the word Satan, without the "the" prefix, occurs, the text is talking about a person who is an adversary, usually against Israel.
- Our understanding of HaSatan and his dealings, especially now, are not developed in Jewish literature until the time of the writing of the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament).
- As far as the Hebrew Bible is concerned, the role of The Adversary is to bring charges against mankind in the court of the King above all kings.
- So, what is HaSatan's argument against Job? (1:10)
  - Job has all this good stuff, so obviously he's living a righteous life. He is being rewarded and protected by God.
  - Rabbi Chaim Jachter says: "Moreover, Satan's criticism of Iyov sheds light onto a fundamental truth. If the world functioned in a manner where every *Tzaddik* (righteous individual) is rewarded immediately and visibly and that every *Rasha* (wicked individual) was punished in an equally transparent fashion, righteousness would be inauthentic. In such a world one's serving of G-d would stem from promise of reward; proper righteousness emerges from genuine awe and devotion towards our Creator."
    - -- "Iyov's Sufferings, The Holocaust and Medinat Yisrael – Part One" by Rabbi Chaim Jachter (2010)
- So, God gives HaSatan the right to test Job.
- So, HaSatan takes away the blessings Job had received from God.
- Note the two things Job was spared in addition to his own life: His wife and his friends.
  - The rabbis say that losing one's wife or being without friends is tantamount to to death

## Job's initial response

- Job 1:21 -- The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.”
- Job knew he was righteous. His initial response was in keeping with that righteousness.
- As a matter of fact, the text says that even in the midst of losing everything he owned, he did not sin.
- Job 2:7-8 - Then, HaSatan was allowed to also take his health

- Then we find out that Job's wife is still around, but she can't stand to see him in so much pain. Imagine the pain that she is in after losing her own kids and property, too!
- She tells Job to just go ahead and curse God and die.
- His response (Job 2:10): Shall we actually accept good from God but not accept adversity?"

### **Job's Friends Arrive:**

- Job's friends came from a long distance away to comfort him.
- Job 2:13 -- Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights, with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.
  - 7 days, which is where the tradition of sitting *shiva* comes from.
- Job was silent throughout these days, too.

### **Structure of the rest of the book:**

- Job says something
- One of his Friends responds
- Job responds to the friend
- Another friend responds
- Then Job Responds to that friend
- And on and on for three different cycles
- At a certain point Friend 3 (Tzophar) seems to be absent, maybe he even walked away in disgust
- Then Friend 4 (Elihu) shows up to take Tzophar's place in the cycle
- Then, in the end, God shows up to respond to all of them.

### **The theme of the book:**

- **Theodicy:** Why do bad things happen to good people, and vice versa
- This is the ultimate question about life. We all ask God about it.
- **The easy answer:** There is a world to come, so even if things are bad in this world, there will be reward in the World to Come. But that's not usually a good answer for someone who is going through a hard time.
- Moses even questioned the Almighty about this principle.
  - Ex 33:18–19 -- Then Moses said, "Please, show me Your glory!" 19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion to whom I will show compassion."
  - There is a tradition in the Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 21b) that "Fifty gates of understanding were created in the world, and all of them were given to Moses, except for one gate..."
  - Just a cool note: The Or HaChaim, a rabbi from the early 1700s in Morocco, says that when the Messiah comes he will reveal that 50th level of insight to mankind.

- God basically says to Moses: That's none of your business. I will have mercy on whom I have mercy.
- There is also a tradition that states that Moses actually wrote the book of Job, possibly even as a parable or a novel, as an attempt to work out the answer to this question.
- In essence, the discussion in the book of Job is about God's Justice.
  - Is He just? How do we know he is just?
  - If God is just, then why is Job suffering?
- The Friends are defending the **traditional view of morality**:
  - God is just and compassionate.
  - He would not allow bad things to happen to people unless they deserve it
  - So, if bad things are happening to you, you must deserve it.
  - So, repent.
- However, Job's situation throws a monkey wrench into this assumption about God's justice. The Friends assume Job must have done something wrong, but, as we will see, Job tells them that he is completely innocent.

### **Job Starts Speaking:**

- And at the end of those 7 days of quiet contemplation and mourning, Job curses the day he was born.
- 3:3 - The day I was born on should be cursed
- 3:11 - why did I not die at birth?
- 3:20 - Why do the people who suffer have to continue living?

### **Eliphaz the Temanite**

- Eliphaz is the first friend to speak up
- 4:7 - No one who has ever perished was innocent
- 4:17 - Can a person actually be 100% just or pure before God? He sees problems with his angels, how much more so mankind? (*kal v'chomer* | light and heavy)
- 5:17-18 - God disciplines his children. This is true!
  - Proverbs 6:23 -- For the commandment is a lamp and the Torah is light; And rebukes for discipline are the way of life.
  - Proverbs 3:12 -- For whom the LORD loves He disciplines, Just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.
  - Hebrews 12:4-11
- Note the back and forth play on words, the extremes:
  - 5:18 - He inflicts pain and gives relief, He wounds and heals
  - This sounds also like this verse in Isaiah 45:6-7 -- "I am the LORD, and there is no one else, The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating bad; I am the LORD who does all these things.

יוֹצֵר אֹר וְבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ עֹשֶׂה שְׁלֹום וְבוֹרֵא רָע אֲנִי יי עֹשֶׂה כָּל-אֵלֶּה:

- Shalom and ra
  - The word "ra" in this case is not the word for something that is morally bad, it is the word for something that is flawed or harmful.
- This section also reminds me of Psalm 91:
  - You will not be afraid of the terror by night, or of the arrow that flies by day

### **Job's Response to Eliphaz**

- 6:9-10 - I just wish God would finish the job! But even with that desire, I still have not denied the Words of God
- 6:14 - You really should be kind to me!
- 6:22 - Did I ask you to "help" me?
- 6:24 - Okay, since you know so much, show me how I have erred.
  - I have not sinned!
- 7:20 - Then he complains to God: Why have you set me as your target? Why don't you pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity
  - Note that Job agrees with the idea that suffering comes as a result of sin, but he still sees himself as not sinful.

### **Bildad Speaks Up:**

- 8:2 - You are a windbag
  - Side note: That's not the only time this comes up
  - Job 15:2 -- Eliphaz calls Job a windbag
    - Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge, And fill himself with the east wind?
    - "and fill up his windbag"
  - Job 16:2-3 - Job calls all three friends windbags
    - Miserable comforters are you all!
    - 3 "Is there no end to windy words?
    - Or what provokes you that you answer?
- 8:3 - Does God pervert justice? Maybe your sons committed a sin and He let them have the consequences of that sin
- 8:20 - God is bigger than you, and He will not reject a man of integrity
  - The implication is "So therefore, you must have sinned and you need repent."

### **Job Responds to Bildad**

- 9:2 - I know God is bigger than me, but how can a person be in the right before him?
  - Job seems to be admitting that he could have sinned
  - 9:12 - How can someone say to God, "What are you doing?" He's the powerful one here.
  - 9:19 - If it's a matter of Power, he is the strong one!
- My conclusion has to be that he's just capricious
  - 9:22 - he destroys the guiltless and the wicked

- 9:29 - If I'm going to be counted as wicked, then why am I working so hard in vain?
  - Also, it's not like I could take him to court and force Him to answer me
- Then Job turns to God again
  - 10:2 - let me know why you contend with me!
  - 10:7 - You know I'm not guilty
  - 10:8 - You made me, are you now going to destroy me? Why would you have made me in the first place?
  - 10:20 - just leave me for a while so I can have some cheer

### **Zophar Responds**

- 11:2 - You talk a lot (not quite a "windbag," but still...)
- 11:4-5 - You say you're innocent, but I really wish God would speak up and show you how wrong you are.
- 11:11 - Can you really know the depths of God? Can you really know you are innocent? God sees iniquity that you can never see.
  - So obviously you have sinned!
- Just repent!

### **Job responds to Zophar**

- 12:2 - Sarcastically - No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you.
- 12:3 - But I'm just as smart as you
- 12:4 - I'm just a joke to my friends -- (ironically) the righteous guy is a joke
- 12:9 - You have to acknowledge that God is the one who did this to me
- 12:12 - Older people like you are wise, (12:13) but God is the ultimate source of wisdom
- 13:2 - I'm not inferior to you
- 13:3 - I just want to argue my case with God, but you are lying about me
  - by saying that my sin brought this calamity on me
- 13:5 - I just wish you would shut up and let that be your "wisdom"
- 13:15 - Though God slay me, I'll still hope in him. However, I still want to argue with him about this.
- 13:18 - I know I will be vindicated
- 14:6 - We are like workers who just want the boss to stop looking at us so we can get our jobs done.
- 14:13-17 - I just wish you would send me to the grave until this is over. If I have sinned, why are you hiding it from me?

### **Eliphaz Responds Again (the second next cycle begins)**

- 15:2 - Should a wise man answer a windbag?
- 15:8 - Do you have secret knowledge that we don't have? We are older than you, and even older than your father (see 12:12)
- 15:15-16 - God doesn't trust the angels, much less the likes of you
- Let me give you a description of the wicked (implication: you are one of them).

## Conclusion

- I don't want to steal any of Sean's thunder for next week, but I'd like to end with a thought about one of the things God is trying to teach Job through this experience. [This “billion page play” example comes from Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz.]
  - God is trying to communicate to Job the complexity and inter-relatedness of the universe.
  - On the one hand, we are isolated individuals, with our own lives and our own responsibilities
  - But on the other hand, we are also cogs in the universe.
  - In his play *As You Like It*, Shakespeare says:
    - All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances.
  - Think of it this way: The play started thousands of years before us, and will end thousands of years after us, and we have been given just one page in this billion-page play.
  - Imagine your page says, Enter stage right, slip on a banana peel, break your leg.
  - The playwright knows what the overall plot and plan of the play is. He knows what the ripple effects of your part are, and how that will progress the play in the way that he knows will best accomplish the drama.
  - The events that befall us do not always relate to our own actions, but they are all part of the Plan of God.
- 
- That brings us back to the Land of Utz. We are told that Job lived in the land of Utz.
  - I think there's a bit of flexibility in naming the place Utz, both because of the fact that it could refer to a few actual places on the map, but also because of the name itself.
  - **בְּאֶרֶץ-עוּץ** = Land of Utz.
  - Utz in this spelling (as well as with the spelling **עֵצוּ**) is also the verb form of the word **עֵצָה** which is a noun that means "a plan"
  - For example, Isaiah 8:10 - "Devise a plan" = **עֲצוּ עֵצָה**
  - So, I think the location where Job lives could also be translated as **the Land of the Plan**.
  - This seems to come back at the end of the story (Job 38:2), when God responds to Job, starting out by saying:
    - Who is this who darkens **the divine plan** by words without knowledge?
    - **מִי זֶה מְחַשֵּׂיךָ עֵצָה בְּמַלְיָן בְּלִי-דַעַת:**
  - Job was living in God's plan.
  - So, once again, the events that befall us do not always relate to our own actions, but they are all part of the Plan of God.